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KNIGHTS
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#8

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SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI

HERE COMES...

DAREDEVIL®

THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!

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HE PLAGUED THE CITY FOR YEARS WITH HIS BIZARRE PENCHANT FOR THEATRICAL CRIMES. MANY DISMISSED HIM MERELY AS A "BUBBLE-HEADED" GRAND-STANDER. BUT TWO DAYS AGO, QUENTIN BECK -- THE MAN WHOSE NOM DE CRIME WAS MYSTERIO -- WAS FOUND DEAD OF AN APPARENT SUICIDE IN A BUILDING HE OWNED IN MIDTOWN.

I'M ALMOST READY, PETER.

DEATH OF A MASKED MAN

POLICE ALSO DISCOVERED THE BODIES OF AT LEAST TWO DOZEN COSTUMED MEN, ASSUMED TO BE IN THE EMPLOY OF THE SO-CALLED "SUPER-VILLAIN." THE D.A.'S OFFICE HAS YET TO MAKE A STATEMENT, PENDING FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

PETER?

TIGER? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

Hmm?

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HE CALLED THIS MORNING, DAILY BUGLE EDITOR IN CHIEF J. JONAH JAMESON INDICATED THAT -- WHILE HE LACKED PROOF ON THE MATTER --

-- HE FELT THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS SPIDER-MAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARNAGE.

HE'S A MENACE! I'VE BEEN SAYING IT FOR YEARS, HAVEN'T I?! WHAT'S IT GOING TO TAKE TO GET THROUGH TO YOU PEOPLE?!

ARE YOU OKAY?

I GUESS. IT'S JUST...

MYSTERIO... HE...

I MEAN, AFTER ALL THIS TIME -- HE'S GONE. I'VE SPENT YEARS FIGHTING THE GUY, AND NOW HE'S DEAD. IT'S JUST...

I FEEL RESPONSIBLE, SOMEHOW.

PETER, THE MAN WAS A LUNATIC. YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT HE DID TO HIMSELF... OR ALL THOSE PEOPLE. HE DOESN'T DESERVE YOUR PITY.

IN A RELATED STORY, CHARGES AGAINST HIGH PROFILE LAWYER FRANKLIN NELSON IN THE MCKENZIE MURDER CASE HAVE BEEN DROPPED FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE AMONGST BECK'S FILES. MORE ON THAT AT THE TOP OF THE HOUR.

DON'T MOURN FOR MYSTERIO. MOURN FOR SOMEONE WHO DESERVES IT.

AND FINALLY TODAY, THE CITY LAYS TO REST ONE OF ITS OWN THIS MORNING...

STAN LEE PRESENTS

GUARDIAN DEVIL

PART EIGHT: THE DEVIL'S DELIVERANCE

KEVIN SMITH
WRITER

JOE QUESADA
ARTIST

JIMMY PALMIOTTI
INKER

RICHARD ISANOVE
COLORIST

RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS
LETTERING

NANCI DAKESIAN
EDITOR

BOB HARRAS
CHIEF

LET US PRAY.

LORD, WE GATHER TO LAY TO REST YOUR DAUGHTER, KAREN. WE ASK THAT YOU WELCOME HER INTO YOUR HEAVENLY KINGDOM, AND GIVE REPOSE TO HER SOUL. THROUGH CHRIST, OUR LORD. AMEN.

I'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT, TRYING TO WRITE A EULOGY.

BUT HOW CAN I POSSIBLY DO KAREN JUSTICE WITH A FEW PAGES OF SCRIBBLINGS CONCEIVED THROUGH A VEIL OF TEARS?

WHAT CAN I SAY TO THESE PEOPLE THAT COULD EVEN REMOTELY COMMUNICATE ALL THAT KAREN WAS AND HOW MUCH SHE MEANT TO ME?

I'VE ASKED MATTHEW MURDOCK, KAREN'S LONGTIME BOYFRIEND, TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE WOMAN WE ALL HELD SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS FOR.

MISTER MURDOCK?

IT'S VULGAR -- PLAYING THE ROLE OF THE HELPLESS BLIND MAN AT THE FUNERAL OF ONE OF THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO KNEW THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT ME.

I FEEL LIKE A LIAR.

HELLO. THIS MAY TAKE AWHILE.

AHEM...

Um... KAREN WAS...

KAREN WAS...

NO...

THERE ARE NO WORDS.

I'LL MISS YOU.

THERE ARE NO WORDS.

AN HOUR LATER...

MISTER MURDOCK?

HELLO, PETER.

MATT... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.

I'M NOT GOING TO BE VERY GOOD COMPANY RIGHT NOW, PETER.

I UNDERSTAND.

BUT I THINK THERE ARE A FEW THINGS WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT.

YES. THERE ARE.

DOES TOMORROW NIGHT SOUND OKAY? HOW ABOUT THE USUAL PLACE? SAY -- NINE O'CLOCK?

I'LL TRY.

I GO HOME.

ONCE HER RADIO CAREER TOOK OFF, KAREN RETAINED THE UPPER WEST SIDE FIRM OF MOSIER, SCHWALBACH, AND PEREIRA TO HANDLE HER CONTRACTS.

SHE'D ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT USING ME AS HER LAWYER WOULD BE A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO HOME FOR HER.

I JUST FOUND OUT WHY.

THERE WAS A SIZEABLE INSURANCE POLICY THROUGH THE STATION...

...FISK'S STATION, IRONICALLY ENOUGH...

...THAT SHE NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT. THE BENEFITS -- IF THEY COULD TRULY BE CALLED THAT -- ARE IN THE LOW SEVEN FIGURES.

IT DOES ME LITTLE GOOD, AS I CAN'T USE IT TO BUY HER LIFE BACK.

THEN, IN THE BOTTOM OF THE ENVELOPE, I FEEL SOMETHING ELSE.

SOMETHING THAT SMELLS LIKE KAREN.

Matt

Lover...

By the time you read this, I hope you're about seventy-five. Will you still be able to feel the raised ink through your aged fingertips, I wonder?

One of the benefits in the west coast WFSK package was an obscene life insurance policy. As you must know already, I've listed you as the beneficiary.

Whenever you get it, if you've ever loved me, I want you to promise that you'll spend the money on yourself. Don't give it to any charities, don't pay bills with it -- spend it on something that'll make you happy (but no girls, Murdock! I've still got my eye on you).

Consider it a bonus for everything I've ever put you through -- good and bad. Consider it a memorial for someone whose whole adult life was primarily a testimony to the power of the love of one good man. Consider it that last kiss I was never able to give you before I left for the west coast (in two days).

But mostly, consider it Yours. Please Matt -- you've always done so much for me; let me do this one thing for you.

Of my death, however it came, I can say only this: it was a small price to pay for the gift of having known you.

Love Forever, Karen.

YOU ALWAYS LEAVE WINDOWS OPEN LIKE THAT?

DON'T YOU EVER KNOCK?

IT'S MY APARTMENT, LADY.

DO YOU EVER MISS THE OLD BROWNSTONE, MATT?

SURE. I'VE EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT REBUILDING IT, ONCE OR TWICE.

I MEAN, I *DO* STILL OWN THE LOT.

THEN WHY DON'T YOU DO IT?

YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT CONSTRUCTION GOES FOR IN THIS TOWN? AND REMEMBER -- I'M ONE OF THOSE IDEALISTIC LAWYERS WHO NEVER MAKES ANY MONEY.

START BILLING HOURLY AGAIN.

HEY -- YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD. WANT A SECRETARIAL POSITION IN MY OFFICE?

THE BENEFITS STINK, BUT I CAN GUARANTEE YOU A LOTTA AFTERNOON DELIGHT WITH THE BOSS.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.

CAN'T BLAME A GUY FOR TRYING. I'M GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER --

-- TRY TO GET THIS MUGGER SMELL OFF ME.

CARE FOR A LITTLE COMPANY, HERO?

ONLY IF IT'S YOU, BABE...

ONLY IF IT'S YOU.

RIKERS ISLAND PRISON BARGE, THE NEXT DAY...

HEY, FREE MAN.

HEY, MATT.

C'MON -- I'VE GOT A CAR WAITING.

WAS LIZ AT THE FUNERAL?

YES.

HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO HER YET?

ONCE. SHE CAME TO VISIT ME.

"I'D SPENT MY FIRST DAY IN RIKER'S GOING OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD WHAT HAD HAPPENED WITH LYDIA.

"I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT IF MAYBE I REALLY DIDN'T SEE WHAT I THOUGHT I SAW. OR MAYBE IF I DID SEE SOMETHING, BUT IT WASN'T REAL.

"MY HEAD WAS SWIMMING. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED, I HADN'T SPOKEN TO YOU SINCE THE ARRAIGNMENT, MY MOTHER WASN'T COMING TO SEE ME, AND I WAS STARTING TO GET RECOGNIZED BY SOME OF THE OTHER INMATES -- GUYS WHOSE CASES WE'D TURNED DOWN IN THE PAST.

"I WAS REALLY SCARED.

"BUT NOT NEARLY AS SCARED...

"... AS WHEN I HAD TO FACE LIZ."

HELLO, FRANKLIN.

LIZ... OH LIZ, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.

IS IT TRUE?

LIZ! I DIDN'T KILL THAT WOMAN! YOU'VE GOTTA BELIEVE ME! SHE WAS SOME SORT OF... I DON'T KNOW... *DEMON!* SHE THREW HERSELF OUT THAT WINDOW! I *SWEAR!*

BUT YOU *DID* SPEND THE NIGHT WITH HER?

I THOUGHT SO.

"LIZ NEVER HAD A NORMAL LIFE, MATT. HER HUSBAND AND HER FATHER-IN-LAW...

"WELL -- YOU KNOW...

"BUT SHE USED TO TELL ME I REPRESENTED STABILITY FOR HER -- SOMEONE SHE COULD COUNT ON.

"AND I LET HER DOWN.

LIZ, I'M SO SORRY... PLEASE -- YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW SORRY I AM..!

"I COULDN'T HEAR HER CLEARLY THROUGH THE GLASS, BUT I KNOW WHAT SHE SAID."

TEARS AND SORROW -- WELCOME TO MY WORLD, FRANKLIN.

"AND THEN SHE WAS GONE."

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT THEY CLEARED THE CHARGES, MATT...

BECAUSE THEY CAN'T ERASE THE REAL CRIME.

NEXT EXIT

THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, LATER THAT NIGHT...

CARE FOR A LITTLE COMPANY?

THAT'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

BUT FIRST, I NEED TO FILL IN THE BLANKS ON MYSTERIO.

I TELL HIM ABOUT HIS ONE-TIME FOE, AND ABOUT HOW HIS TERMINAL CONDITION PUSHED HIM OVER THE EDGE. ABOUT HOW HE CHOSE ME AND MY LIFE TO USE IN HIS SWAN SONG RAMPAGE. ABOUT HOW HE'S HIRED BULLSEYE...

I TELL HIM ABOUT THE BABY, AND ABOUT THE KINGPIN'S ROLE IN ALL OF THIS. AND ABOUT HOW MYSTERIO ULTIMATELY TOOK HIS OWN LIFE...

I TELL HIM THAT PART WITH AN ALMOST SHAMEFUL ENTHUSIASM.

AND WHEN I'M DONE, HE SAYS...

NO OFFENSE, PETE -- BUT THE COMPANY I'D REALLY CARE FOR WON'T BE SHOWING UP TONIGHT.

OR EVER.

I'M SORRY, MATT.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.

I'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE, TOO. BUT WHEN SOMEONE DIES AFTER LEADING A RECKLESS LIFE THAT INEVITABLY CATCHES UP WITH THEM...

YOU LEARN TO SLEEP AT NIGHT, I GUESS.

SOONER OR LATER.

IT HAPPENED TO ME ONCE. IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO --

-- BUT NOT SO LONG AGO THAT I STILL DON'T THINK ABOUT IT EVERY TIME I'M TRADING PUNCHES WITH ONE OF THESE EGOTISTICAL MENTAL CASES.

THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE TO THE JOB.

YES, BUT KAREN WAS AN INNOCENT.

THE CONCLUSION I'VE COME TO AFTER YEARS SPENT DOING THIS IS THAT THERE ARE NO INNOCENTS. EVERYONE'S GUILTY. EVEN US.

ESPECIALLY US.

BECAUSE FOR ALL THE 'GOOD' THAT WE TRY TO DO, WE CAN'T DAMN THE TORRENT OF DEATH AND INJUSTICE THAT THREATENS TO DROWN US EVERYDAY. WE'RE GUILTY OF BEING BANDAGES ON LEPROSY, BUT STILL OUR HUBRIS WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE THAT WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WELL, WE DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO QUENTIN BECK.

ALL THAT DEATH AND MADNESS HE CAUSED -- ALL IN THE NAME OF SELF-ESTEEM. THE GUY ENDED LIVES -- PROMISING OR OTHERWISE --

-- AND FOR WHAT? TO PROVE HE WASN'T AS BIG A LOSER AS HE FELT THE WORLD THOUGHT HE WAS?

WHAT A JOKE.

NO PETER -- THERE ARE NO INNOCENTS. EVEN IN THE STRICTEST OF DEFINITIONS, PEOPLE LIKE THE LOVED ONE YOU MENTIONED AND KAREN ARE STILL GUILTY.

THEY'RE GUILTY OF DYING, AND LEAVING US ALONE IN THIS MIRE OF SOLITUDE AND MISERY.

AND CAN YOU *BLAME* THEM? WHY SHOULD THEY HOLD ONTO LIFE? JUST TO BE WITH LIARS LIKE US? THAT'S WHAT WE ARE, REALLY -- LIARS. ALL WE OFFER IS FALSE HOPE.

WE TELL PEOPLE BY PUTTING ON THESE CLOTHES AND BEATING UP CHAIN SNATCHERS AND MUGGERS THAT *"IT'LL ALL BE OKAY. WE'RE HERE TO STOP THE MADNESS."* BUT WE'RE LYING, BECAUSE WE KNOW WE CAN'T STOP IT ALL; THERE'S TOO MUCH.

AND IN THE CASE OF SOMEONE LIKE KAREN, WE'VE DAMNED THEM SIMPLY BY THIRD PARTY ASSOCIATION. COSTUMED LUNATIC *'A'* HATES ME, SO IN AN EFFORT TO DESTROY ME, HE'LL KILL HERO FRIEND *'B'*.

IT'S *INSANITY*, MAN! AND WE'RE THE CRUCIAL COG IN THE DAMNATION MACHINE, PEOPLE LIKE US! BECAUSE NOTHING GOOD COMES OUT OF ANYTHING WE DO!

BECAUSE WITH BECK AND ALL OF HIS VICTIMS OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS DEAD AND BURIED, CAN YOU TELL ME ONE THING -- JUST ONE THING -- THAT MAKES ANY SENSE IN THAT MESS WHATSOEVER?!?

YOU *SAVED* THAT BABY GIRL'S LIFE, MATT.

THINK ABOUT IT. GOTTA GO.

THWIP

SEE YOU AROUND CAMPUS.

THANKS, PETER.

I OWE YOU ONE.

1313 AVENUE B, APARTMENT 9B...

KNOCK KNOCK

TONY...?

YOU...!

WHOA!

BAP

WAIT... NATASHA...!

PSYCHOPATH! PERHAPS I SHOULD EXTEND YOU THE SAME COURTESY YOU SHOWED ME ON THE ROOF, YES?!

TALK FAST BEFORE I SEVER YOUR VOCAL CHORDS!

MUH... MYSTERIO...

I'M SORRY. I HAVE SOME EXPLAINING TO DO.

I'D SAY YOU DO INDEED, COMRADE. COME INTO MY PARLOR...

THAT WAS YOU?

YES...

LATER...

YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU WERE DRUGGED?

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER REASON I'D ATTACK YOU LIKE THAT?

ONE OR TWO.

I'LL ALLOW, MATTHEW, THAT PERHAPS WHATEVER TOXIN MYSTERIO POISONED YOUR LOGIC WITH EXACERBATED YOUR RAGE AGAINST ME. BUT I THINK THERE WAS SOMETHING THERE TO BEGIN WITH.

LIKE WHAT?

I THINK BENEATH YOUR NOBLE, QUIET EXTERIOR, LIES THE HEART OF A MAN WHO FEELS BETRAYED BY WOMEN.

THINK ABOUT IT: YOU WERE ABANDONED BY YOUR MOTHER AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE. AND THEN WHEN YOU GET INVOLVED WITH WOMEN, THEY SCAR YOU TERRIBLY. I KNOW *I* NEVER GOT SERIOUS ENOUGH FOR YOU. KAREN...

POOR KAREN...

SHE BROKE YOUR HEART TOO MANY TIMES TO NUMBER. GLORI TURNED TO YOUR BEST FRIEND FOR COMFORT DURING THAT FISK BUSINESS. THAT CRAZED HARLOT YOU CARRIED ON WITH -- THE ONE WITH THE PAINTED FACE...?

TYPHOID MARY.

YES -- SUCH AN UNFORTUNATE NAME.

AND THEN THERE'S THAT GREEK ASSASSIN...

YOUR ROMANTIC HISTORY LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED, MATTHEW. THE WOMEN YOU'VE FALLEN IN WITH HAVEN'T NECESSARILY BEEN ANGELS, AND THAT'S BOUND TO HAVE AFFECTED YOU OVER THE YEARS.

IT HAS -- AMONGST OTHER THINGS -- MADE YOU VERY FRAGILE.

ARE YOU INSINUATING I'M A MISOGYNIST?

NO, LOVE. BUT I *DO* BELIEVE YOU SHOULD SPEND SOME TIME DOING A LITTLE SOUL-SEARCHING. TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL THINGS DISTAFF BEFORE YOU HEAD INTO ANY OTHER FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS.

WHICH, I REALIZE, IS THE LAST THING ON YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW.

YOU ARE ONE OF THE ONLY MEN TO EVER REALLY TOUCH ME, MATTHEW. I TELL YOU THESE THINGS NOT TO HURT YOU, BUT TO HELP YOU.

BECAUSE SOMEONE AS GOOD AS YOU SHOULDN'T BE ALONE.

YOU DESERVE TO BE LOVED AND CONTENT AND FULFILLED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, BECAUSE YOUR LIFE AS DAREDEVIL WILL NEVER OFFER YOU PURCHASE FROM THE STORM. YOU NEED A PLACE TO HANG YOUR HEART AT THE END OF THE DAY.

YOU NEED PEACE.

BUT IF I'VE EVER IMPARTED ANYTHING TO YOU, PLEASE LET IT BE THIS...

LOOK WITHIN YOURSELF FOR THAT PEACE BEFORE YOU LOOK FOR IT IN SOMEONE ELSE. BECAUSE YOU'LL ONLY BE SETTING THAT SOMEONE ELSE UP TO DISAPPOINT YOU.

GOT IT, RED?

GOT IT, RED.

BUT IF YOU EVER TRY TO CRIPPLE ME AGAIN...

...I'LL PUT THE BRIDGE OF YOUR NOSE INTO YOUR BRAIN.

YES, DEAR.

THIS USED TO BE MY HOME.

KINGPIN BLEW IT UP ONCE -- A LONG TIME AGO.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I WANT TO THANK HIM.

HE'S GIVEN ME A CHANCE TO REBUILD...

I GOT YOUR CALL. WHAT'S UP?

HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH YOUR MOTHER YET?

SHE CALLED TO ASK ME BACK TO THE FIRM. YOU TOO. BUT I COULDN'T PICK UP THE PHONE. IM...

...I'M NOT SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT HER RIGHT NOW.

WHY DO YOU ASK, ANYWAY?

YOU AND I ARE UNEMPLOYED -- SOMETHING WE NEVER HAVE TO BE AGAIN...

...IF WE WORK SOLELY FOR OURSELVES.

HERE?!

WHY NOT? THE LOT'S MINE.

AND I'VE RECENTLY COME INTO RAINY DAY MONEY THAT I PROMISED SOMEONE I'D PUT TO GOOD, SELFISH USE. SO WHADDYA SAY, FOG?

NELSON AND MURDOCK?

NELSON AND MURDOCK!

SAINT VINCENT'S HOSPITAL, THE NEXT MORNING...

CAN YOU FEEL THEM?

WITH YOUR HAND ON THE GLASS -- CAN YOU FEEL THEM THAT WAY?

YES. I FEEL THEM BREATHING. THE GLASS HEATS UP AND EXPANDS AS THEY EXHALE, AND YIELDS AS THEY INHALE.

I NEVER KNEW THAT.

IT'S SLIGHT, BUT WITH EVERY BREATH THEY TAKE, THEY AFFECT THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROOM.

I'M SURE THERE'S AN IRONIC OBSERVATION TO BE MADE HERE SOMEWHERE --

-- SOMETHING ABOUT HOW POWERFUL THE SEEMINGLY HELPLESS REALLY ARE, IN ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLE WAYS.

I DON'T KNOW IF THOSE WAYS ARE NECESSARILY IMPERCEPTIBLE.

THAT SO-CALLED *"HELPLESS"* LITTLE BABE IN THERE BROUGHT A MOTHER AND SON TRULY TOGETHER, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER THIRTY YEARS.

LOOK AT HER -- AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO HER, SHE'S STILL ABLE TO SLEEP.

THAT'S ONE CENTERED INFANT.

ONE *CENTERING* INFANT, TOO.

DO YOU RESENT HER, MATTY?

THE BABY?

YES. FOR BEING AT THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.

I THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE. WHEN I DROPPED HER OFF HERE AFTER MYSTERIO KILLED HIMSELF...

... I COULDN'T HELP THINKING THAT BECK PUT ME THROUGH ALL THAT PAIN, AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE HAD TO DIE...

... AND AT THE END OF IT ALL, THE BABY WAS NOTHING MORE THAN JUST A BABY.

AND I'M ASHAMED TO SAY THAT FOR A DAY OR TWO, I DID RESENT HER.

BUT THEN I TALKED TO A FRIEND, WHO HELPED PUT THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE. AND I REALIZED THAT THAT LITTLE GIRL...

WELL -- SHE *IS* A SAVIOR.

MATERNITY WARD

SHE'S *MY* SAVIOR.

BECAUSE OF HER, I CAN SALVAGE SOME SANITY FROM THE MAELSTROM. WITHOUT HER, I'D HAVE LOST MORE THAN I DID OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS. I'D HAVE LOST MY MIND, MY SOUL...

MY FAITH.

NO, THAT LITTLE GIRL IS DEFINITELY MY SAVIOR. AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, SHE REPRESENTED THE ONLY THING THAT STOOD BETWEEN ME AND THE ABYSS.

AND I'LL ALWAYS LOVE HER FOR THAT.

I'M PROUD OF YOU, MATTHEW.

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN.

HAS SHE FOUND SOME PARENTS YET?

ONCE THE STATE WAS ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT THERE WERE NO LIVING RELATIVES, IT TOOK LESS THAN A DAY TO FIND SUITABLE ADOPTIVE PARENTS. IT'S A YOUNG COUPLE IN NEW JERSEY, WHO'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A BABY FOR SOME TIME NOW.

THAT'S REALLY GREAT. MAYBE THEY'LL ALLOW A VISIT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE FROM HER UNCLE MATT.

THEY *DO* WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE BABY'S NAME IS, THOUGH. DOES SHE HAVE ONE?

I WAS NEVER TOLD. I DON'T THINK HER MOTHER HAD THE CHANCE TO NAME HER.

THEN I GUESS WE CAN TELL THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS THAT THEY'RE FREE TO NAME HER WHAT THEY'D LIKE.

WELL...

MAYBE I SHOULD...

I MEAN...

DO YOU HAVE A NAME YOU'D LIKE TO GIVE HER YOURSELF, MATTHEW?

EXI

KAREN.

HER NAME IS KAREN.

EXIT

THE KITCHEN HAS A SOUND TO IT ALL IT'S OWN -- A SOUND I LIKE TO THINK OF AS ITS HEARTBEAT.

I'VE FELT IT SINCE I WAS A CHILD -- EVEN BEFORE THE ACCIDENT. IT'S THE RHYTHM OF THE TRAINS UNDER THE ASPHALT, THE COLLECTIVE MURMUR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE HUM OF THE STREET LIGHTS -- EVEN DURING THE DAY.

BUT I'VE ALSO ALWAYS FELT ANOTHER PRESENCE ON THESE STREETS.

SOMETHING A LITTLE LESS EXPLICABLE.

SOPHIE
EXPRESS DELIVERY

Maria's Beauty Salon

FORGIVE ME FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED.

Maria's Beauty Salon

IT'S BEEN A MONTH OR SO SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION.

AND HOW DO YOU FEEL?

I FEEL...

I FEEL LIKE I'VE REMEMBERED SOMETHING I'D FORGOTTEN A LONG TIME AGO.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD THING.

NOW, WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A CONFESSION OF YOUR SINS?

FIRE...

DOWN THE BLOCK...

AND WHAT SOUNDS LIKE A CHILD, TRAPPED BY THE BLAZE!

MY SON?

SORRY FATHER...

NO REST FOR THE WICKED!

EXCUSE ME?

HEY! WHERE'D HE GO?!

TO DO MY FATHER'S WORK, PADRE...

TO DO MY FATHER'S WORK...

ZONE EMPIRE